

Agricultural Research Service, USDA

§ 520.6

development, planning and implementation which are related to routine activities such as personnel, organizational changes or similar administrative functions;

(2) Activities which deal solely with the functions of programs, such as program budget proposals, disbursement, transfer or reprogramming of funds;

(3) Inventories, research activities and studies, such as resource inventories and routine data collection when such actions are clearly limited in context and intensity;

(4) Educational and information programs and activities;

(5) Activities which are advisory and consultative to other agencies, public and private entities, and

(6) Activities related to trade representation and market development activities overseas.

(b) *ARS categorical exclusions.* ARS actions which, based on previous experience, have been found to have limited scope and intensity and produce little or no individual or cumulative impacts to the human environment. Some examples are:

(1) Repair, replacement of structural components or equipment, or other routine maintenance of facilities controlled in whole or in part by ARS;

(2) Research programs or projects of limited size and magnitude or with only short-term effects on the environment. Examples are:

(i) Research operations conducted within any laboratory, greenhouse or other contained facility where research practices and safeguards prevent environment impacts such as the release of hazardous materials into the environment;

(ii) Inventories, studies or other such activities that have limited context and minimal intensity in terms of changes in the environment;

(iii) Testing outside of the laboratory, such as in small isolated field plots, which does not involve the use of control agents requiring containment or a special license or a permit from a regulatory agency.

(c) *Exceptions to categorical exclusions.* An environmental assessment shall be prepared for an activity which is normally within the purview of categorical exclusion if there are extraor-

dinary circumstances which may cause such activity to have a significant environmental effect.

§ 520.6 Preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA).

(a) *Actions requiring EA.* The following actions would normally require an EA:

(1) Programs, supported in the majority by ARS, which may assist in the transition of a particular technology from field evaluation stage to large-scale demonstration or simulated commercial phase;

(2) Field work having an impact on the local environment such as earth excavation, explosives, weather modifications, or other such techniques; and

(3) The testing outside the laboratory, such as small isolated field plots, of control agents which require containment precautions or either a special license or a permit from a regulatory agency.

(b) *Multiple agencies actions.* If more than one Federal agency participates in a program activity, the EA shall be prepared by the lead agency as provided in 40 CFR 1501.5.

(c) *Format and conclusion.* An EA can be in any format provided it covers in a logical and succinct fashion the information necessary for determining whether a proposed Federal action may have a significant environmental impact and thus warrant preparation of an EIS. The EA will contain the information required by 40 CFR 1508.9. This information will include brief discussions of the need for the project or other proposal, alternatives, environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives and a listing of agencies and persons consulted.

(d) *Decision notice.* Upon completion of an EA, the responsible official will consider the information it contains, decide whether an EIS is required or that no significant environmental impact will occur, and will document the decision and the reasons for it. The decision and the EA shall be available to the public in a manner appropriate to the situation. If there is a finding of no significant impact, the EA may be combined with the decision notice.